

Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC)

Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

DROUGHT AND BURN BAN SITUATION REPORT # 27 31 October 2008, 1600 Hours

New Information in Bold Italic Type

SUMMARY

Statewide precipitation for the previous water year (1 October 2007 through 30 September 2008) was in the normal range. Statewide precipitation for the period from October 1, 2006 through **October 23, 2008 was below normal. Statewide precipitation for the period from January 1, 2008 through October 23, 2008 was below normal; statewide precipitation for the current water year (from October 1 through October 23) was well below normal (25%), and precipitation was below normal in all drought evaluation areas. Welcomed precipitation was received in much of the state during the month of September, however the Big Sandy, New River and Upper James drought evaluation regions received below normal precipitation during this period. Cumulative precipitation deficits for the period beginning October 1, 2006 generally increased one to five percentage points since the last report due to the unusually dry conditions during the first three weeks of October. The Northern Virginia and Eastern Shore drought evaluation areas are currently in the normal range of precipitation for this extended period.** Precipitation greater than 85% of normal is considered to be in the normal range.

EXECUTIVE ACTION

EOC Activation: The Virginia Emergency Operations Center is at Routine Operations.

State of Emergency: Governor Timothy M. Kaine declared a Statewide Emergency on 18 October 2007 and imposed a statewide ban on all open burning. The statewide ban on open burning was lifted by Governor Timothy M. Kaine on 15 November. The Statewide Emergency remains in effect to deal with potential or actual drought related issues.

Governor Kaine announced on 20 October 2008 that the Secretary of the US Department of Agriculture designated Amelia, Amherst, Bedford, Campbell, Dinwiddie, Halifax, Louisa, Nelson, Nottoway, Pittsylvania and Prince Edward counties primary natural disaster areas because of reductions in farm production caused by drought and excessive heat that occurred this calendar year. Governor's Office – [Federal Disaster Designations for Eleven Virginia Counties](#)

Governor Kaine sent a letter to all localities dated 29 November 2007 advising them that the most effective water restrictions are those developed at the local level and asked that localities review their drought water conservation and contingency plans associated with public waterworks and if there was no current drought plan, one should be developed. Governor Kaine also asked localities to review their local ordinances requiring mandatory non-essential water use restrictions during declared emergencies and assure that the ordinances are consistent with the Virginia Drought Assessment and Response Plan and if the locality has not adopted such ordinances, they should consider the development and adoption of these. The potential for the Commonwealth to experience drought impacts this summer remains significant and a forum was held 2 June 2008, at the Library of Virginia to address water conservation and drought topics. DEQ – [COV Drought Response Plan](#)

Executive Order: [Executive Order 57 \(2007\)](#); [Executive Order 74 \(2008\)](#)

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WEATHER FORECAST

Friday, 31 October: *Sunny; high temperatures mid to upper 60s; west-southwest winds 5 to 7 MPH. Friday night – Partly to mostly cloudy; low temperatures mid 30s to low 40s; west-southwest winds 3 to 6 MPH.*

Saturday, 1 November: *Mostly sunny to sunny; high temperatures upper 60's to low 70s; west-northwest winds 5 to 8 MPH. Saturday night – Partly to mostly cloudy; low temperatures upper 30s to low 40s; north-northeast winds 3 to 7 MPH.*

OPERATIONS SECTION

ESF 3 – Public Works & Engineering: Virginia Department of Health has not reported any impacts to public water supplies that have compromised their ability to provide the needs of their customers. 51 systems have initiated water conservation measures; 5 have initiated mandatory water conservation requirements and 46 have initiated voluntary water conservation requirements. Water conservation requirements at public water supplies have decreased slightly since the last report when 46 systems were on voluntary restrictions and 9 systems required mandatory conservation.

Waterworks are encouraged to develop water conservation and contingency plans and local governments are encouraged to adopt local water conservation ordinances. [DEQ Water Conservation Tips](#)

ESF 4 – Firefighting: *The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) reports very light fire activity over the last month. Virginia Fall Fire Season began 15 October 2008 and runs through 30 November 2008. VDOF reports 16 wildfires burned 19 acres since 15 October and since January 1, 2008, VDOF has responded to 1,276 wildfires which burned 25,804 acres and damaged or destroyed 15 homes and 48 other structures. The large fire in the Dismal Swamp, which burned close to 5,000 acres, was officially declared out on 7 October 2008. [VDOF Fire Summation Report 31 October 08](#)*

ESF 5 – Emergency Management: VDEM posting event related items to WebEOC under event titled “WebEOC, 2007-10 Drought and Burn Ban”; Participating as member of the Drought Monitoring Task Force; assessing the impact across the Commonwealth; VDEM Operations Director, Harry Colestock, and VDEM Recovery and Mitigation Director, George Roarty, attended a North Carolina Emergency Management Forum in Asheville, North Carolina, that discussed the drought in the Southeastern US.

- Virginia's plans and current efforts were discussed and included background of recent droughts, development of the Virginia Drought Assessment and Response Plan, current drought impacts, Governor's Emergency Declaration, resources in readiness, water system problems exacerbated by drought and potential funding and other resources to mitigate the impacts of the drought situation.

ESF 11 – Agriculture and Natural Resources: Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) reports that according to the USDA Crop Weather Report **released on October 20, 2008, 43% of topsoil moisture ranged from short to very short. Most of Virginia was dry over the last few weeks, except for a few areas that experienced light to moderate showers. As of October 20, 2008, twenty-nine localities have requested the Governor's assistance in obtaining federal disaster designation due to drought conditions. On October 15, 2008, the US Secretary of Agriculture named eleven of the localities primary disaster areas due to drought and excessive heat. Governor Kaine is in the process of preparing the official requests for disaster designation for an additional thirteen localities: Albemarle, Buckingham, Caroline, Fluvanna, Franklin, Goochland, Greene, Hanover, Henry, Isle of Wight, Lunenburg, Powhatan, and Rockbridge. The**

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Farm Service Agency is in the process of preparing the loss assessment reports for an additional five localities: Brunswick, Charlotte, Mecklenburg, Scott and Surry.

Overall, VDACS staff reports that although water tables are still low, they have received few complaints from farmers. Farmers appear to be pleased with the dry weather which is allowing them to harvest their crops. The fall grasses appear good in most areas. Conditions continue to vary around the state, on a regional level as well as on a local level.

As a result of the hay shortages caused by the drought, the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission has allocated \$500,000.00 to livestock producers in the Southwest Virginia counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe. [VDACS Drought Related Information](#); [VDACS Hay Clearing House](#)

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) reports ***limited access at boat ramps on several rivers across the Commonwealth. Boaters are advised to check the Department's web site at www.huntnfishva.com prior to going out and for specific information on individual boat access points. Significant rainfall is needed prior to any fall stocking of trout. Under normal conditions stocking would begin on 1 October but did not due to low streamflows. Hatchlings are likely to be small when stocked due to decreased feeding. Currently very few streams have adequate flow to support stocking. Fall hunting seasons are under way and hunters have been reminded to pay particular attention to fire safety in consideration of the dry conditions. Significant drought impacts are beginning to become measurable in the agriculture sector with 19 localities requesting drought disaster designations. The longer range concern is that lower than normal precipitation during the fall and winter of 2008-2009 will deepen the existing accumulated precipitation deficits and set the stage for significant drought impacts across all socio-economic sectors in the spring of 2009.*** Fortunately water temperatures have been falling and the impact of reduced downstream flows will be mitigated by these lower temperatures.

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) chairs the Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force and reports ***the latest NOAA drought monitor indicates some increases in drought conditions in the Commonwealth since the last report.*** About one half of the Commonwealth is currently experiencing drought conditions that range from abnormally dry to severe drought. The western half of the Commonwealth as well as a narrow strip along the North Carolina border is currently experiencing these drought conditions. ***The NOAA seasonal drought outlook through December 2008 indicates that drought conditions are likely to persist in the areas of western Virginia currently experiencing drought.***

While drought monitoring ground water levels data is scarce, ground water levels are generally well below normal levels in areas west of Interstate 95 and in the southern Coastal Plain. Ground water levels are in the range of normal levels on the Eastern Shore, the northern Coastal Plain, the northern Shenandoah Valley, and northern Virginia. Twelve dedicated drought monitoring wells are at levels indicative of normal ground water levels, three are at levels indicative of moderate hydrologic drought (10th to 24th percentiles), two are at levels indicative of severe hydrologic drought conditions (< 10th percentile), and three wells (two in the central area of the Coastal Plain and one in western Virginia) are at record low levels. ***Levels of large reservoirs in the eastern half of the Commonwealth have rebounded significantly during the last month but large reservoirs in the western portion of the Commonwealth continue to decline. Water surface elevations of major reservoirs in eastern Virginia are mostly normal but western reservoirs continue to hold lower than normal volumes of water. Lake Moomaw on the Jackson River now has only 10% of its conservation storage remaining. The reservoir is seriously low, about 8% lower than it was at this time last year. The Corps of Engineers, in response to a request from the***

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State reduced releases from 180 cfs to 140 cfs and then reduced releases further on October 27th to 100 cfs. Inflows are averaging about 40 cfs. Smith Mountain Lake is 3.5 feet below full pond having lost a half of a foot in the past month. The lake is about a foot below the level that it was in October of 2007. Releases have been operating under a variance since mid July. A request has been made to FERC to allow a stakeholders group to continue to guide the reduced releases under a variance procedure. Philpott Lake has fallen to 10 feet below the guide curve, having lost a foot in the past month. Energy production is being transferred from Lake Philpott to Kerr Reservoir in order to help the lake level recover. This means less water is being released to the Smith River. Due to careful management and moderate precipitation Kerr Reservoir remains near the guide curve at 297.5 feet. The project continues to release the minimum amount of water necessary to fulfill its energy contracts. October inflows are the fourth lowest in a 77 year period of record. Weekly conference calls are used to guide releases. Lake Anna is in good shape, slightly less than full. The lake was overflowing as recently as September 27th.

US Geological Survey reports that stream gages are showing that statewide precipitation last week, cooler temperatures, and reduced evapotranspiration have allowed streamflows to improve slightly over conditions observed last month, especially in the southwestern portions of the State. However, because September and October statistically have the lowest normal range of streamflows, any increase in water use (natural or man-induced) can cause streamflows to drop to critical levels. Streamflows east of the Blue Ridge Physiographic Province are generally in the normal to below normal range of flow. Last month, most of these gages showed flows in the normal range of flow, primarily as the result of precipitation along the coast. Streamflows in the Blue Ridge and Valley and Ridge to the west are generally in the below normal, to well below normal ranges of flow. The greatest improvement is in the upper Roanoke Basin. Stream flow conditions in the Shenandoah Valley, which previously had flows in the normal range of flow, have worsened and now are similar to stream flow conditions in the southern Valley and Ridge Province. [US Drought Monitor - VA](#): [US Seasonal Drought Outlook](#): [USGS Water Watch-Drought](#): [DEQ Drought Status Reports](#)

ESF 15 – External Affairs: Public Affairs Officers from VDEM, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Forestry and Department of Health and representatives from VDH Office of Drinking Water developed and presented a comprehensive state communication plan to the Drought Monitoring Task Force and are incorporating recommendations into the plan, prior to submission for final approval.

PLANNING SECTION

Situation/Documentation Unit: Monitoring situation and issuing monthly situation reports. **Next Situation Report will be issued Thursday, 27 November 2008.**

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